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PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

I. PROBLEMS

There is no systematic way for the President to know that agencies, or parts thereof, are performing poorly. There is no clear responsibility for overseeing the launching of new programs nor for resolving management issues related thereto. There is no well organized mechanism to provide outside help when an agency program is in trouble.

SOLUTIONS - (To be discussed)

II. PROBLEMS

Federal managers are not managing well enough. In some cases this is because they lack the authority to exercise judgment and make decisions. In other cases, they do not have the skills to manage; nor is there an adequate and systematic program to build those skills. High turnover in noncareer positions makes it difficult to sustain management initiatives. In still other cases, there is no clear policy guidance. Many simply do not accept the fact that they have a responsibility to manage. There are too few incentives for good management and too few disincentives for poor management. The Civil Service Reform Act (if its features can be maintained) adds incentives and disincentives, but it remains to be seen whether they will be used. There is virtually no attention to non-monetary incentives which the White House and agency headquarters could use to positive affect; no real effort to build a working relationship with senior career people. There is an insufficient recognition of the impact on senior career employees of actions perceived to reflect hostility toward them.

4.

SOLUTIONS - (To be discussed)

III. PROBLEMS

There is too often no sense of urgency to make decisions and take actions. Problems are put off; regulations delayed; applications not acted upon; mail and telephone calls not responded to. Conflicts within and between agencies are not brought to resolution, nor is it clear who is responsible for doing so. Studies, planning, research and exchanges of memoranda substitute for action. Most importantly, those in higher authority are often not even aware that things are dragging.

SOLUTIONS - (To be discussed)

IV. PROBLEMS

Managers find it more and more difficult to take timely and decisive action because of the need to comply with an increasing number of specific directives from the Congress as a whole, those of committees, and even individual members of their staffs. Similarly, the central management agencies and agency headquarters have vastly expanded their regulations to control management decisions. More recently, the courts have substantially increased their intervention into agency management. (A trend which has been accompanied by holding more public managers personally and financially liable for their acts or failures to act). These decisions are made with little understanding of the administrative impact. Similarly, everyone has their favorite concept of what should be done in management terms with little consideration of the

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resources necessary to do it. Managers find that process is driving out substance. These situations are exacerbated by the fact that the policies and rules laid down by Congress and executive agencies are sometimes in conflict with one another (e.g., does the government support contracting out or does it "use the skills already available"; does it support lowest cost bidding or minority firm set-asides; does it want people with extraordinary expertise or does it want to avoid conflicts of interest?).

SOLUTIONS - (To be discussed)

V. PROBLEMS

A proliferation of oversight agencies both official and unofficial (e.g., media, special interest groups) are exercising judgments about the propriety and correctness of management decisions. Many judgments are made from narrow points of view with little consideration of the overall situation faced by managers. Many depend on after the fact knowledge. Oversight agencies are essentially critics with no real responsibility for making things work. The time and effort needed to respond to oversight groups often diverts managers from actions to improve performance.

SOLUTIONS - (To be discussed)

6.

VI. PROBLEMS

The constitutional separation of legislative and executive roles are eroding. There are insufficient mechanisms for accomodating their conflicting views. There is no willingness in Congress to tolerate occassional failure, nor paradoxically to put an end to programs which have persistently failed. Both Congress and the executive branch react to incidents rather than patterns of mis-management. Each seeks to be tougher than the other in imposing controls with little attention to the aggregate effect. (The complexity of this problem is compounded by the recent expansion of the role and influence of Congressional sub-committees and their staffs. Whereas there were previously a few major Congressional Committees and sub-committees with an interest or responsibility for oversight of Executive Branch operations, today there is almost an unlimited number of Congressional sources that may take an interest or impact on the internal management of Executive departments.)